



2014 SkillsUSA KY Welding and Welding 1

*Hosted by United Association
Plumbers, Pipefitters & Service Technicians
Local Union 502*



The SkillsUSA KY welding and welding 1 state events are bigger and more competitive than in previous years. WHY? For the second year, Local Union 502 hosted both events and the results have been outstanding. From modern facilities, superior equipment, supplies, and judges, the United Association Plumbers, Pipefitters and Service Technicians provided contestants with a competition to challenge their skills...exactly the type of competitive event to get a gold medalist ready for national competition. This year, there were 31 competitors in the welding competition and 15 entered in welding 1. This set an all-time record for both contests. And, Local 502 provided all the materials for the competitions - which earned them a Gold sponsorship award from SkillsUSA KY.

Under the watchful eyes of contest chairman Chris DeSpain, Local 502 welding coordinator, and his distinguished judges, contestants were graded on the merits of their ability.

“We have great facilities and were determined to hold a rigorous competition - so, our team created a project to test skills,” said Chuck Graham, director of training. “It’s the way we do things because we take this very seriously. In order to move to the next level, these competitors had to show us they were capable. In the real world, this means time and money. We were surprised at how well some of these competitors performed and compliment school instructors for what they are teaching their students in the classroom.”



Above: Chris DeSpain provides directions for the competitors.

Local Union 502 supports the mission of SkillsUSA and believes that training high school students is essential in order to keep the pipeline full of interested and skilled young people. “Having an opportunity to host this type of event allows us to see the best in the field. And, it is our hope that some of these skilled young people join our apprenticeship program,” said Graham. “We want to introduce them to a worthy career pathway.”



Chuck Graham
Director of Training:

“We have hosted this competition for two years and this year we saw more competitors enter our facility. This was great because we have a lot to offer and this allowed us to show off our premier training facility. We have a five-year apprenticeship program, extensive journeyman training, organized instructor training, and certification programs.

“There is a great need for welders in this state and across the United States. Student organizations like SkillsUSA provide a great opportunity for education and industry to come together for the benefit of the whole. We can all help each other and in the process, many young people will find a way to make a great living. A new flurry of skilled labor is needed in order for the United States to remain strong because many in the current workforce are ready for retirement. We are hopeful that SkillsUSA will provide us with an avenue to recruit new blood into our organization. And, it certainly helps that these students already have basic skills.

“To show we are serious, we would like to offer the first place winners of the secondary and postsecondary welding competitions an opportunity to train in our facility for the national conference. Take us up on this offer... we can be of service to you. Call us at 502-778-3380. We look forward to hearing from you because we want Kentucky to win gold at the national conference in Kansas City.”





Photos below show students involved in various aspects of the welding contests.

Chuck Graham is presented a SkillsUSA KY Power Partner plaque. Photo, (l to r): Chris DeSpain, welding coordinator; Bill Houchin, welding instructor; Fran Dundon, SkillsUSA KY business & industry director; Chuck Graham, director of training; Larry Johnson, SkillsUSA KY state director; Mike Toler, welding instructor; and Erik Elzy, school coordinator.



G. Scott Jennings
Territory Sales Manager
ESAB Welding & Cutting Products:

ESAB recognized as “Platinum Sponsor” during Opening Ceremony:
Photo, (l to r): ESAB Territory Sales Managers Todd Harris, (West Region)
and G. Scott Jennings, (South Region)

“At ESAB, we’re committed to helping new welders master their craft. That’s why we offer educational materials and an educational discount to trade apprenticeship programs, colleges, career centers, vocational schools, and high schools that provide welder training.

“Welding is rapidly becoming a dying ‘Art’. The majority of truly skilled welders are reaching, or have reached, retirement age. Without successful training programs at the state and local levels, our country’s skilled welding workforce could face extinction.

“It was great to see the number of young adults cultivate their learned skills and then display them at the regional and state SkillsUSA KY competitions. The dedication of the students, parents, and instructors is so obvious when you are able to watch these young people compete and display their finished products.

“The Commonwealth’s budgetary constraints on vocational education programs limit the ability of educators to provide all of the resources they would like to use in the classrooms. Somehow teachers have found a way to do the best that they can with what they can afford. ESAB attempts to assist these teachers and schools by allowing the use of the ESAB Educational Discount Program to provide deep discounts for equipment and materials required in training of new welders.

“Working with the Kentucky Office of Career and Technical Education and SkillsUSA KY is as beneficial for ESAB as much as the participants. Not only do we get to meet these wonderful young people, but we have the opportunity to possibly help them realize a successful career in welding.”



Photo, (l to r): Matt Dowdy, Mayfield/Graves Co. ATC (2nd),
G. Scott Jennings, ESAB; and
Kelly Lucas, Meade Co. ATC (1st place winner).



Not pictured: Benjamin Dunavent,
Franklin Co. CTC (3rd)

Kelly Lucas:

"I would like to thank ESAB, Lincoln Electric, Miller, Lincoln Tech, Ohio Tech, and Tulsa welding school, along with all the other sponsors who donated their time, money and products. Without you, things like our SkillsUSA State Conference could not happen."

"Thank you to Mr. Warren Shelton and his son, Dr. Tommy Shelton, for sponsoring a travel scholarship to the national conference. This means so much to me."

"The Local 502 was awesome in every aspect of the word - professional and challenging. I will always be grateful not for the prizes alone, but the opportunity to experience something like state skills. So, I would personally like to thank everyone involved for such an awesome experience."

SkillsUSA KY Welding Secondary Division





**Karl Watson
Welding Instructor
Somerset CC:**

“Both Doug and Jonathan found the welding competition challenging. Doug Costello was shocked with the value of the prizes, especially the welder by ESAB and the Lincoln prizes.”

“I personally like having the welding competition at the Pipefitters local, especially from the standpoint that no one has a clue what the contest will be. This makes it completely fair and truly tests the training and ability of the participants.”

Photo at left, back row: G. Scott Jennings, ESAB. Front row, (l to r): Jonathan Miller (2nd), Somerset CC; Tilden Cross, (3rd), Elizabethtown Technical College; and Doug Costello, (1st), Somerset CC.

**SkillsUSA KY
Welding
Post-
Secondary
Division**



Jennings and Costello

SkillsUSA KY Welding 1 Competition



Photo, (l to r): Levi Miller (2nd), Meade Co. ATC; Scott Jennings, ESAB; and Zachary Scroggins (3rd), Belfry ATC.
Not pictured: Dylan Wright, first place winner from Foster Meade Vocational Education Center

Levi Miller:

“The prizes and generosity that were given by ESAB and Lincoln Electric were great. The prizes were more than I was expecting.

“The Local 502 was a great set-up. They obviously are top of the line in technology, equipment, and instructors. Thanks to the local 502 for having us and to Lincoln and ESAB for the prizes.”



*Dave McCoy, welding instructor
Meade Co. ATC:*

“I would like to thank all of the sponsors for their contributions. The welding industry has always been extremely supportive. The generosity of companies such as ESAB and Lincoln Electric shows all of us how much they are interested in the future of welding and SkillsUSA. Thank you. We appreciate everything you have done for our students.

“The Local 502, in my eyes, has definitely raised the bar for competitiveness. I was more than impressed by the project the 502 had for the competitors and believe that it will prepare students to compete on a national level. We were all very impressed because they did a great job in conducting the competition. Thanks to Chuck Graham and all the 502 judges.”

Recognition and Appreciation

Dundon:

“Our welding competitions have dramatically improved in the last two years because of the outstanding support and attention provided by Local 502. The welding competition has doubled in size and we have been able to add a new welding 1 competition as a state only contest.

“Our members are getting a first class, quality competition in state of the art facilities - and the level of difficulty in the projects as well as the judging standards are making a difference. On behalf of SkillsUSA KY - thank you to Chuck Graham and everyone at Local 502 for this partnership and for the willingness to work with our GOLD medalists prior to national conference. WOW!”

Photo at right: G. Scott Jennings is recognized on stage as a SkillsUSA KY Power Partner for prize and supply donations.

Dundon:

“Meeting Scott Jennings at the Clay Co. ATC regional competition was a blessing. He understands and values the welding industry as well as the SkillsUSA KY students who are trying to compete at the next level. His partnership efforts have been noticed by students and advisors across this state. Thank you to Scott and ESAB for the fantastic partnership. Our students have benefitted as a result and that’s what it’s all about.”

Erik Elzy, Local 502 school coordinator, accepts the SkillsUSA Gold Power Partner award on stage during the 2014 Opening Session.

*Story and layout by Fran Dundon - May 2014
Photos courtesy of Tim Thornberry*



SkillsUSA
KENTUCKY